

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00 INRE-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 NEAE-00 SAM-01 OMB-01 SCCT-01 /065 W

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O R 211412Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5932

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 332

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJ: SYRIA CONTINUES EFFORTS STABILIZE LEBANESE CRISIS

1. SUMMARY: JUMBLATT MET JAN 20 WITH ASAD, KHADDAM, COS SHIHABI AND INTELLIGENCE COORDINATOR NAJI JAMIL. SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTED KARAME RESIGNATION ISSUE STILL UNRESOLVED. KING HUSSEIN'S STATEMENT PROFFERING HIS SERVICES TO RESOLVE CONFLICT CITED. PHOTO IN AL-BAATH SHOWING CHRISTIANS GUARDING MUSLIM CIVILIAN PRISONERS IN QUARANTINA COULD HEIGHTEN ANXIETY AMONG DAMASCENE CHRISTIANS. SYRIAN PRESS LESS RELUCTANT TO PRINT HARSH TRUTH ABOUT LEBANON THAN RADIO AND TELEVISION. ASAD-JUMBLATT TALKS PRESUMABLY INTENDED MOVE LATTER'S POSITION CLOSER TO THAT OF KARAME. END SUMMARY.

2. MEDIA HIGHLIGHTED VISIT PSP LEADER JUMBLATT TO DAMASCUS JAN 20. AL-BAATH BANNERED "ASAD REVIEWED CONFIDENTIAL

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WITH JUMBLATT LEBANESE SITUATION AND EFFORTS BEING

EXERTED TO SETTLE CRISIS." ASAD-JUMBLATT MEETING ALSO ATTENDED BY FONMIN KHADDAM, COS SHIHABI, AIR FORCE COMMANDER AND OVERALL SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE COORDINATOR NAJI JAMIL, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF LEBANESE LEFTIST GROUPS. JUMBLATT ALSO MET SEPARATELY WITH KHADDAM, INTERIOR MIN ALI ZAZA AND LEBANESE BAATHIST LEADER QANSU. JUMBLATT DEPARTED FOR BEIRUT EVENING JAN 20.

3. PRESS REPORTED THAT "BLOODY CLASHES CONTINUE IN BEIRUT AND SUBURBS WHILE TENSION PREVAILS IN REMAINING LEBANESE REGIONS." AL-BAATH NOTED THAT SITUATION STILL "UNCLEAR" ALTHOUGH TWO DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE KARAME RESIGNATION. KARAME WILL REPORTEDLY MEET JAN 21 WITH FRANGIE TO DISCUSS RESIGNATION QUESTION. AL-BAATH CITED "LEBANESE PARLIAMENTARY SOURCES" WHO ASSERTING THAT FRANGIE WILL DECIDE WHETHER ACCEPT KARAME RESIGNATION JAN 22.

4. JAN 21 AL-BAATH DISPLAYED ON FRONT-PAGE PROVOCATIVE PHOTO OF PRISONERS (PRESUMABLY MUSLIMS) LINED UP AGAINST WALL WHILE GUARDS, INCLUDING ONE SPORTING LARGE CROSS CLEARLY VISIBLE ON CHEST STOOD BY. PHOTO CAPTIONED "QUARANTINA PRISONERS." THIS IS FIRST PROVOCATIVE PHOTO OF CRISIS WE HAVE SEEN PUBLISHED IN DAMASCUS. PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN SOURCE TOLD US PUBLICATION OF THIS PHOTO BOUND TO SEND SHIVERS THROUGH SYRIAN CHRISTIANS AND RAISE FEARS OF SPILL-OVER OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT INTO SYRIA.

5. PRESS PUBLISHED EXERPTS FROM KING HUSSEIN'S STATEMENT EXPRESSING HIS WILLINGNESS TO HELP RESOLVE CRISIS, NEED TO PRESERVE LEBANESE UNITY, AND CONDEMNATION OF CONFESSIONALISM.

6. WE TOLD BY IDONESIAN EMBOFF THAT DURING CONVERSATION WITH "HIGH MFA OFFICIAL" JAN 19 OFFICIAL ASSERTED SARG HAD RECEIVED INFORMATION ORIGINATING WITH LEBANESE INTERIOR MIN CHAMOUN "ADMITTING" PHALANGE
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BEING SUPPLIED WITH WEAPONS BY ISRAEL. OFFICIAL PROFESSED HE "PRAYING" SYRIA WILL NOT SEND TROOPS INTO LEBANON BECAUSE THIS WOULD DRAW IN ISRAELIS AND LEAD TO SERIOUS HOSTILITIES.

7. COMMENT: SYRIAN RADIO AND TELEVISION, WHICH REACH WIDER DOMESTIC AUDIENCE THAN SYRIAN PRESS AND PICKED UP BY LEBANESE AS WELL, APPEAR TO BE INTENTIONALLY

DOWNPLAYING SERIOUSNESS OF RECENT ROUND OF LEBANESE
FIGHTING WHEREAS PRESS COVERAGE SOMEWHAT FULLER.
WE SUSPECT PHOTO MENTIONED PARA 4 MAY HAVE SLIPPED
THROUGH, SINCE REGIME ANXIOUS TO PREVENT
SPREAD OF LEBANESE RELIGIOUS TENSIONS INTO SYRIA
AND BAATHI DOCTRINE IS SPECIFICALLY NON-SECTARIAN.
CONCERNING JUMBLATT VISIT, IT SEEMS CLEAR FROM ARRAY
OF KEY SARG OFFICIALS WHOM ASAD INVOLVED AS WITNESSES
THAT DISCUSSION WAS WIDE-RANGING. WE PRESUME SYRIAN
INTENTION WAS TO MOVE JUMBLATT CLOSER TO KARAME.
MURPHY

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